

PREPARING FOR ORCHESTRAL CELLO AUDITIONS: THE STUDY OF
STANDARD ORCHESTRAL EXCERPTS FOR CELLO

by

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To Janos Starker, my teacher, inspiration, and papa-san

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, applying for auditions in professional orchestras has become almost a required process for people who plan to pursue professional careers as musicians. Accordingly, there are many cellists preparing for auditions all over the world. Naturally, since there are only a limited number of available positions in professional orchestras, the audition process has become extremely competitive and highly intense. Therefore, it is typical to find students in music schools taking orchestral literature classes, although such classes are mostly available only to graduate students. Even though many cellists start playing in orchestras (especially school orchestras) at an early age, few young cellists have enough chances to be exposed to the orchestral literature in depth. As a result, there is a lack of resources to help young cellists prepare for auditions besides taking classes and/or private lessons. Thus, many cello students have difficulty in understanding the orchestra literature and practicing orchestral excerpts. Yet young cellists need to be aware that playing in the orchestra is different from playing as a soloist.

A few academic documents have already been written about orchestral excerpts. *A Collection of Orchestral Excerpts for the Cello Categorized by their Technical Aspects* by David Litrell was written in 1977.¹ It categorized over three hundred excerpts by their technical aspects including rhythmic difficulties, left-hand problems, and bowing issues. *Selected Orchestral Excerpts for Cello: Analyzed and Graded* by Linda Jean Shay was written in 1979.² She reviewed the excerpts from eight orchestral books by Leonard Rose

¹ David Ault Littrell, *A Collection of Orchestral Excerpts for the Cello Categorized by their Technical Aspects* (DMA document, University of Texas at Austin, 1979).

² Linda Jean Shay, *Selected Orchestral Excerpts for Cello: Analyzed and Graded* (DMA

and William Stokking, among others. These documents serve best as a master list of excerpts with a huge number of excerpts. Moreover, they were written more than thirty years ago, and the audition process has since changed greatly.

There are two recent documents about orchestral excerpts. *A Detailed Study of Selected Orchestral Excerpts* by Susan Moyer (2009) reviews fifteen orchestral excerpts and discusses challenging issues for each excerpt.³ *A Contextual Approach to Learning Orchestral Excerpts for Cello* by Zlatina Staykova (also 2009) reviews ten orchestral excerpts, categorized by composer.⁴ She presents basic information on the composers and the works as a whole, and discusses the excerpts based on their technical difficulties. However, neither of these go into sufficient depth to cover specific excerpts in detail; nor do they satisfy the need for solutions on how to practice and prepare the excerpts for auditions.

There are many cellists who hesitate to try orchestra auditions, simply because they do not know where to begin. Nowadays, it is easy to gain access to information on auditions, especially online. However, detailed information about the audition process is generally not given to cellists before they experience auditions. In Chapter One, I discuss: (1) application process, including how to find vacancies in orchestras and how to apply for open positions, (2) how to practice, and (3) the live audition process.

The purpose of the present document is to provide general information on the orchestral literature as well as detailed instructions on how to practice orchestral excerpts,

document, The Ohio State University, 1977).

³ Susan Elizabeth Moyer, *A Detailed Study of Selected Orchestral Excerpts for Cello* (DMA document, The University of Miami, 2009).

⁴ Zlatina Staykova, *A Contextual Approach to Learning Orchestral Excerpts for Cello* (DMA document, The Florida State University, 2009).

including suggested fingerings and bowings.

The document discusses the nine excerpts most frequently requested in auditions. They were selected by comparing the audition lists from major orchestras in the United States in recent years, and also from my own experience in taking auditions for major orchestras in the United States, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, and New York Philharmonic. For each excerpt, two main aspects are discussed: (1) general background information of the works, the reasons why each excerpt was included in the audition repertoire, and what audition committees look for in each excerpt, (2) the technical and stylistic issues of each excerpt and how to resolve them measure by measure.

Many young cellists are seeking a position in a professional orchestra. Some of them hesitate to start preparing, because they have a little understanding of where to start and how to find resources on the excerpts. The goal of this document is to give these cellists an idea of how to take their first step in preparing auditions. I also hope that the detailed studies and suggested practice method, bowings and fingerings help cellists to have a better understanding of how to practice excerpts.

CHAPTER ONE: THE AUDITION PROCESS

1. Application Process

1.1. Finding job vacancies

The first step in the application process is to find information about vacancies in orchestras. Generally speaking, orchestras post their job openings on their webpages. Because these openings do not come up regularly, it is essential to check the websites of all the orchestras you are interested in auditioning for frequently. A few webpages combine the job openings from different orchestras into one listing: for example, Magnum Opus and Musical Chairs. Magnum Opus (<http://mag.numop.us/>) is a community-driven job board, operated by Thought Factory, LLC. This page offers information on orchestra auditions in North America. There is no charge to find job openings and download information on each audition, including an audition list, without joining the website. You can receive alerts for new openings with a paid service. Musical Chairs (<https://www.musicalchairs.info>) provides information on not only orchestra positions but other music-related postings for musicians, including teaching positions, administrative positions, and competitions. Their orchestra job posting covers worldwide orchestras, including professional orchestras in Asia.⁵ Information on this website is free.

Once you find out that a position is available through one of these websites, visit the official websites of the orchestras for detailed and accurate information.

⁵ <https://www.musicalchairs.info/about/> (accessed 1 August 2017)

1.2. How to apply

Nowadays, most of the major orchestras in the United State have an online application system through their website. Mostly, you are asked to provide brief information about yourself, including name, address, contact information, and musical history (e.g., orchestral experience and educational background). A few major orchestras sometimes ask for information about your musical references. In that case of being asked for the letters of recommendations, you can either upload the letters online or send them by mail. Or you can have your references to send the letters directly to the orchestras.

Once you submit the online application, you should email your resume to the email address given on the audition packet. Usually, orchestras ask for a one-page resume rather than a curriculum vitae. Unlike a regular resume you might use for other job openings, the resume for orchestra auditions should start with your orchestra experience. This should include not only experiences in professional orchestras, but school orchestras and orchestras at music festivals. Cellists who already have experience in professional orchestras have a better chance to be invited to auditions. Young students who do not have experience in professional orchestras should still provide as much as information as they can relate to orchestras of any kind. If cellists have advanced to a higher level in auditions, that information would be also helpful. Below the orchestral experience, cellists can provide education, teachers, competitions, performance experience (non-orchestral), and so on. Keep it to one page.

After submitting the resume (or sometimes attaching it to the online application), you will receive an invitation, generally through email, rarely in the mail. If you are not

invited, a few orchestras give you a chance to send a recording with excerpts selected from their audition list. It is considered a pre-preliminary round. Most cellists who have just begun to audition need to participate in this round.

Either way, once you get invited to live auditions, then you will receive an audition list from the orchestra with the invitation. At this time, you might need to reserve your audition date if the audition is held over several days. Also, to save an audition date, you might need to send a deposit check, which you will get back at the audition.

Most of parts for orchestral auditions are available online, primarily on IMSLP Petrucci Music Library.⁶ There are a few parts not available online, such as Prokofiev symphonies, in which case most orchestras provide parts.

After receiving the invitation and having all the excerpts in your hands, the next thing cellists should do is Practice!

2. Practice Method

I would like to summarize a few practice skills to use when practicing excerpts, or even for solo playing. The first step in practicing excerpts is following all the indications on the score, including rhythm, intonation, dynamics, tempo marks, articulation marks, and so on. Nothing should be neglected. In the advanced level of practicing, not only follow what is written on the score, but also try to understand both the style of the music and the role of the excerpt in the whole piece.

⁶ IMSLP Petrucci Music Library, http://www.imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 2 August 2017) .

2.1. Tempo

Deciding the tempo is an important prerequisite of practicing excerpts. If there is a specific metronome marking by the composer on the score, that would be the strongest indication for you to follow. Of course, there are a few exceptions where flexibility is allowed. When there is no metronome marking on the score, tempo marks such as Allegro, Andante, and Adagio give us an idea of the range of tempo. Other sources that can help find an appropriate tempo for excerpts are audio and video recordings. Nowadays, not only CDs but many video resources are available online. However, sometimes we are exposed to too much information, so we should be able to prioritize the resources. It is helpful to find any available recordings of the orchestras or the conductors you are auditioning for. If not, compare the tempo of legendary recordings from historical recordings and the most recent recordings by major orchestras. Since the classical music scene evolves and develops as time goes by, it is good to know the trend.

2.2. Rhythm

Rhythm is the most important factor to consider when practicing orchestral excerpts. Once you have decided the tempo of the excerpt, make the rhythms accurate. Therefore, practicing with the metronome is an essential part of practicing excerpts. In order to practice rhythm precisely, you can always subdivide the beat into the smaller beats.

2.3. Intonation

When you practice intonation of the excerpts, it is essential to understand what the other sections are doing at the same time. Make sure that you are always playing in the orchestra, not alone. The intonation has to match the other parts. You should look at the

scores and understand the harmony of the excerpts. To practice the intonation of the excerpts itself, it is helpful to use a tuner to make the intonation precise.

2.4. Bow Distribution

In many slow excerpts, sometimes even in fast excerpts, bow distribution is another important element to consider when practicing. It is also one matter that cellists easily neglect. Well-planned bow distribution makes bow control much easier.

2.5. Dynamics

Playing the excerpts in the exact dynamics on the score is associated with bow distribution. Make sure that the dynamic markings are always relative. Do not try to follow one dynamic indication, but look at them in the whole excerpt.

2.6. Articulation

In the excerpts, all the markings on the score are important. Articulation markings, such as dots or accents over the notes, are not as precise in meaning as the intonation or the rhythm. It should be always considered whether the bow stroke is off the string or on the string. Also, the length of the dots should be decided carefully within the context.

3. Live Auditions

When you arrive at the preliminary round of an audition, you will be handed a list of selected excerpts that you will be asked to play in the round. Usually, the orchestra selects a few excerpts from the master audition list, and you will be asked to play them in order. In general, you will start with something from a standard concerto before playing the excerpts. The concerto playing usually lasts 3–5 minutes (without accompaniment).

Sometimes, the orchestra asks for one or two specific concertos in their audition lists (e.g. the first movement with cadenza from the Cello Concerto in D major by Joseph Haydn or the first movement of the Cello Concerto in B minor by Antonín Dvořák). If not, participants can choose a concerto that displays their virtuosic and polished playing at its best. Be aware that you need to give some aspects high priority when playing a concerto in orchestra auditions. You must represent your precision in rhythm, fine intonation, variety in tone color and bow strokes, instead of playing big and loud as a soloist. It would not be a surprise if the orchestras add other solo repertoire besides a concerto. For example, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Saint Louis Orchestra have been known to include the Arpeggione Sonata, D. 821 by Franz Schubert as solo repertoire.

It has become common to include one or two movements from the Six Suites for Solo Cello by J. S. Bach in audition lists. For example, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra have included one movement from Bach's Suites. A few orchestras such as the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra specify playing a prelude movement. In addition, the New York Philharmonic has asked two movements from the Suites including a Prelude. In the auditions for titled positions such as associate, associate principal, and principal positions, two contrasting movements from the Suites are more frequently asked (e.g., by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra). It is important for participants to show they understand the style of music by Bach (which might be the only repertoire from the Baroque period on the audition list). Be able to show your precise intonation and clean sound with proper bow strokes.

After the solo repertoires, you will move on to the excerpts. It is common to start with excerpts from the second movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. The order of the list can vary. The standard excerpts asked for in the preliminary round most commonly are from: the second movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, the second movement of Brahms' Symphony No. 2 (or third movement of his Symphony No. 3), Debussy's *La mer*, the scherzo from the incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mendelssohn (often replaced with the overture to *The Bartered Bride* by Smetana nowadays), optionally, the second movement of Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4 (or the second movement of his Symphony No. 6), and the lastly Strauss's *Don Juan* (or *Ein Heldenleben*).

Audition committees reserve the right to dismiss any candidate at any point during auditions. It is common to ask for one or two excerpts from the work by Strauss as the last barrier in the preliminary round of the audition. Once you advance to the next round, you might have several rounds of audition until the orchestra hires someone for their opening. When you advance to the final round, unlike the previous rounds which are mostly held behind a curtain, you will be asked to play in front of the audition committee members, including the music director of the orchestra. The concerto excerpt (sometimes with an accompanist) will be longer than in the previous rounds, and you will have to play most of the excerpts from the master audition list. A few orchestras ask for brief sight-reading or chamber-music playing with members of the orchestra.

CHAPTER TWO:

DETAILED INSTRUCTION ON SIGNIFICANT EXCERPTS FOR ORCHESTRAL AUDITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, II, beginning to m. 10

Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor was written in 1807–1808. It is one of the most celebrated orchestral works in history. This symphony consists of four movements. The second of the four movements is in A-flat major, the submediant of C minor. The first movement famously captures the audience's attention by its striking four-note motive. In contrast, the second movement, *Andante con moto*, begins with a lyrical theme led by the cello and viola section in unison, with the double bass accompaniment (see Ex. 1). Excerpts from this movement appear on the top of the repertoire list in almost every orchestral audition. The structure of these excerpts is a theme and variations, each of which should be played as one phrase without any interruption. Keeping the continuity is substantially important. The melodic path of this excerpt starts from scale degree 3 in m. 1, and passes through scale degree 4 in m. 3, and finally moves up to the scale degree 5 in m. 7, which is the climax of this phrase. The function of the cello section changes in m. 8 from being a melodic part to being bass part. The first violin section and bassoon come in as melodic part as the cello section joins with the basses. The flute continues the melody from the last beat of m. 10 (see Ex.1), and the lyrical theme continues past the cello's excerpt.

Cellists who prepare for auditions should focus particularly on practicing the basic elements of the music which audition committees will look for; these include accurate rhythm, tempo, tone color, bowing and dynamic. Practicing the excerpt with rhythmic precision would be a good first step; using the metronome will be extremely

helpful. The second principle issue would be to decide on a proper tempo to show the musical character of the melody. The third issue concerns tone color. The fourth is about bow distribution and dynamics. The fifth would be about bowings and fingerings.

Example 1. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, beginning to m. 10, score

1. Tempo

This movement is marked the title of *Andante con moto*. In this excerpt, deciding the tempo is somewhat challenging. Originally, the metronome marking on the score is eighth note = 92. However, my suggested tempo for auditions is eighth note = 88.

Andante means ‘at a walking pace’ in Italian, so it is not as slow as *Adagio*. *Con moto*

means ‘with motion’ in Italian. Therefore, you have to keep in mind that the tempo of this movement is slow but must show the continuous flow of the melody. Eighth note = 88 will be felt quite fast as *Andante* in performance.

It is very common to perform this movement in a slower tempo than eighth note = 92, and some of the orchestras perform the work in much slower tempo. For example, in a 1954 recording of the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan, the tempo of this movement is eighth note = 76.⁷ At that time, it was frequently performed more slowly than eighth note = 80. Recently, there are some orchestras that try to perform it in the tempo marking of the score, eighth note = 92. The recording of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra with Jaap van Zweden has around eighth note = 88.⁸ This performance was recorded live in 2007.

In the preparation of this excerpt, it is good to try to practice this excerpt at the marked tempo. Playing this excerpt in a relatively fast tempo allows one to easily imbue the melody with motion. It is suggested that one practice it in a slow tempo at first and gradually accelerate up to eighth note = 92. After practicing with different tempos, cellists should be able to choose their own tempo such that they can produce a beautiful melody line that also has a sense of motion.

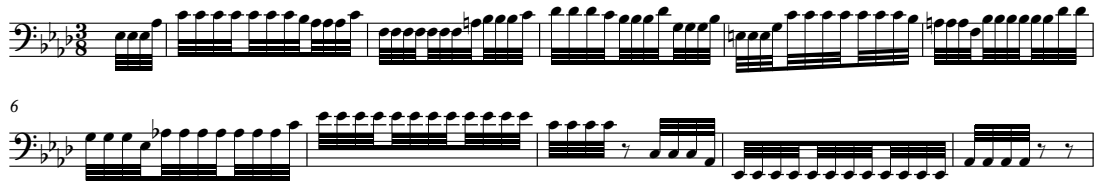
2. Rhythm

In this excerpt, the cellist has to produce dotted rhythms accurately. The

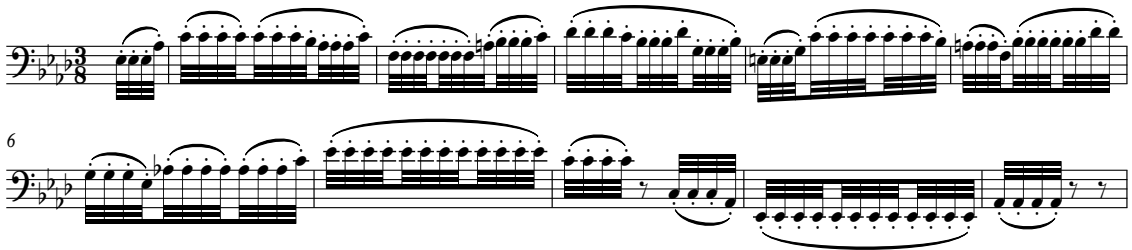
⁷ Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan (Polydor International GmbH Hamburg, 1984), compact disc.

⁸ Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, Dallas Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jaap van Zweden (Dallas Symphony Orchestra, 2007) compact disc.

suggested way of practicing the rhythm is to use a metronome to subdivide the eighth notes into the thirty-second notes (see Ex. 2.1). Also, you can practice the excerpt by stopping the bow every thirty-second note for the entire melody (see Ex. 2.2).

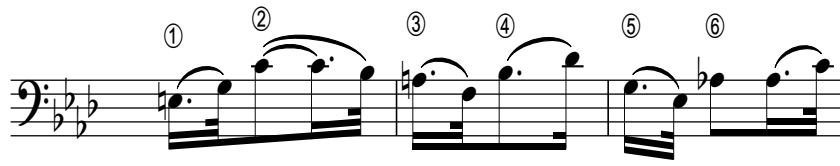


Example 2.1. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, beginning to m. 10, cello part, rhythm practice with separate bows



Example 2.2. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, beginning to m. 10, cello part, rhythm practice with slurs with staccato

There are actually two types of dotted rhythms in this excerpt. One is made up of a dotted sixteenth note and a thirty-second note (①, ③ and ⑤), and other of a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note (④). (see Ex. 3)



Example 3. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, mm. 4–6, cello part, dotted rhythms

In general, cellists tend to play the sixteenth note of ④ too short- thus, making the rhythm of ④ and ② sounds almost the same. In this excerpt, it is extremely important to differentiate the rhythmic value of ④ and ②. To hold the sixteenth of ④ long enough, one can subdivide the sixteenth note into thirty-second notes. In addition, vibrating this sixteenth note is helpful for holding it long enough, and this practice can also impart a lyrical character to the melody. The length of the tied-over note in the rhythm of ② has to be consciously projected. Therefore, it is good to practice the rhythm of ② without the tie, so that the cellist can also get the sense of how the rhythm of ⑥ should sound.

Playing the excerpt with accurate rhythm will be the most important element that audition committees will consider. Particularly in this excerpt, it is challenging to play the precise dotted rhythms and tied notes without disturbing the lyrical quality and legato phrasing.

3. Tone Color

Tone color is also one of the key elements of this movement. Beethoven wrote *dolce* (sweet, soft, or tender) at the beginning of the theme in this movement. In order to bring out this sweet and tender character in the melody, a sufficient amount of vibrato in the left hand is needed throughout the entire theme and variations. Also, the vibrato has to be delicately controlled as well. While practicing, you should avoid generating a

nervous sound by vibrating the notes one by one, which is a difficult task in any case. It is highly recommended that one groups the notes in the same position together and try to vibrate them in one continuous motion. For example, at the beginning of this excerpt, from the E flat to C at the down beat of m. 1, you should be able to play the three notes without stopping the vibrato between the notes. In this case, the thirty-second note which is relatively short, can be also vibrated.

4. Bow distribution and dynamic

Bow distribution is also crucial in this excerpt. As it is mentioned above, the control of the bow decides musical continuity. From the beginning to m. 10, you should be able to create one fluent phrase without any interruption. The first ten measures contain string-crossings, shifts, and sudden dynamic changes. These aspects should not disturb the direction of the phrase. For example, m. 3 is played in one bow, and should be prepared in m. 2. In m. 4, because more bow is needed for the down-bow than the up-bow, it is recommended that one use enough of the up-bow to give a enough room for the down-bow. In order to regulate the volume, despite of the changes of bow speed, one should control the weight on the bow to maintain the same volume through until measure 6.

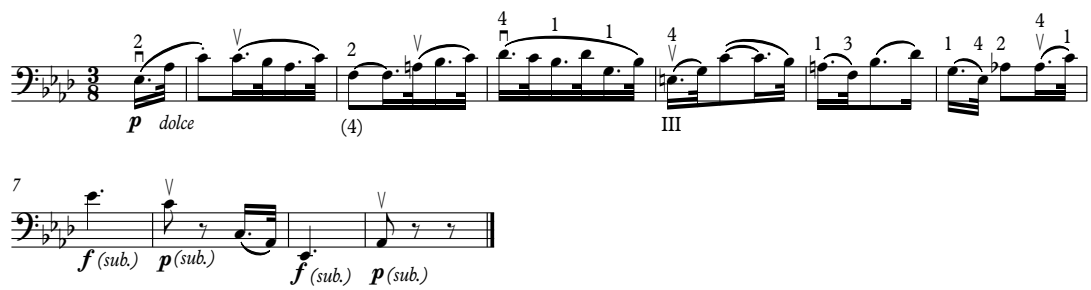
Then there is a sudden dynamic change in m. 7. It is extremely tempting to increase the volume with the up-bow on the last beat of m. 6. Instead you should control the weight on the bow to keep the volume *p* until the last note of m. 6. It is easy to start *f* in m. 7 at the frog of the bow, but the *f* should not be forced and aggressive. A warm and heavy sound will be suitable this measure as well as a slow and wide vibrato. There is *subito p* occurs right away in m. 8. After keeping the *f* until the last moment of m. 7, you

should be at the tip of the bow. You can even tilt the bow toward the fingerboard of the cello and use an extremely small amount of the bow at the tip. Another sudden dynamic change occurs in m. 9 again, and can be approached with the same idea as m.7.

5. Bowings and fingerings (see Ex. 4)

When deciding bowing and fingering, musical continuity has to be considered. This movement is in 3/8 time, and thus should have a feeling of upbeat going into the first beat of the first measure. Two possible bowings are commonly used for the beginning of the excerpt. In order to show the direction of the upbeat, the melody is often begun with an up-bow, changing the bow on the downbeat of m. 1. Nevertheless, the pick-up dotted rhythm has to be connected to the downbeat. In order to show more connection between the pick-up and the downbeat, you can choose to start with a down-bow and slur the upbeat and the downbeat of m. 1.

In m. 2, it is common to play the F with the fourth finger on the G string. However, some instruments have a bad wolf tone on this note, and the players may choose to go down to the D string with the first finger. In this case, you should be careful not to make a glissando on coming down to the note F. The same consideration applies to G in m. 3. The easiest way of playing the note is to extend the first finger from the fourth finger without shifting. The cellists, who are not able to reach G by extending the first finger, should simply practice shifting without a glissando.



Example 4. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, beginning to m. 10, cello part, with bowing and fingering suggestions

Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, II, mm. 49–59

This excerpt has many features in common with the opening theme including tempo, tone color, the direction of the melody and dynamic contrast. The viola and cello sections start the melody together with *pizzicati* from not only the double bass but also in the violins while, the clarinet sustains a long note above. From m. 56, the first violin section and bassoon take over the melody line, and the role of the cello section comes down to the bass part (see Ex. 5). Because of the continuous sixteenth notes through the variation, steadiness is the most important key word for this excerpt.

1. Tempo

The tempo of this excerpt should be kept the same as that of the theme. It is helpful to sing a few measures of the theme in mind before starting to play the excerpt. Once the excerpt has started, tempo should remain the same until the end. It should not be affected by any string crossing, shifting, or vibrato. Also, it would be good to keep counting the eighth notes throughout the excerpt for steadiness.

2. Tone color (vibrato and bow speed)

A *dolce* character has to be maintained. Vibrating all the sixteenth notes is necessary to make this melody sound tender and connected. However, it is challenging to vibrate every sixteenth note without interruption. The vibrato can get too tight if one tries to vibrate a lot for each note. Consistent vibrato is needed instead of fast and irregular one. Fast vibrato will make the sound unstable and shaky. As it is mentioned before, vibrating the notes as a group, instead of vibrating one by one, will be helpful. Sometimes vibrato disturbs the consistency of the bow. The bow speed should be steady, and one should avoid any accent be made with vibrato. Since the bowing is simple, one bow per measure besides mm. 48–49, it is important to have a consistent bow speed throughout this excerpt.

3. Dynamics

The *p* from m. 49 has to be observed until the *f* comes in m. 56. It should not have any *crescendo* or *decrescendo* until that point. The dynamics of the first variation are the same as those of the theme, except for a short *crescendo* in m. 57. One should make sure that the *f* of m. 58 is no longer *subito*. The volume increases from three sixteenth notes in m. 57. The *subito p* in mm. 57 and 59, is should be dealt with in the same way as those in

mm. 8 and 10 (tilting the bow at the tip and using an extremely small amount of the bow).

4. Rhythm

Continuous sixteenth notes appear through this variation. The rhythm of this excerpt is not complicated or as difficult that of the theme. Steadiness will be the most important issue to keep in mind. In mm. 51 and 53, string-crossings occur. These string crossings should be dealt with care as not to ruin the steadiness of the rhythm. There is a grace note in m. 55. You can practice without this grace note at first to have an accurate placement of the sixteenth notes. Once the sixteenth notes become, you can add the grace note to the melody without an interruption.

5. Bowing and fingering (see Ex. 6)

The bowing of this excerpt is very simple. The written bowing is the most suitable for this excerpt. Start with a down-bow, in order to play with a down-bow on the *subito f* in m. 56. Also, for the string-crossings on the down beats of mm. 51 and 53 it is easy to maneuver at the tip of the bow with up-bows.

Also, there is a limited choice of fingerings for this excerpt. The number of shifts has to be minimized, also the same for the string crossings. The left hand stays on D and G strings from mm. 49 to 55, moving up to the A string for the brighter color for *subito f* in m. 56. For *subito p* in m. 57, the left hand goes back on D string with the fourth finger for a soft sound.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for a cello part. The first staff, starting at measure 49, contains six measures of music. It begins with a rest, followed by a series of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, mostly beamed together. Above the notes, numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicate suggested fingerings. The first measure has a fingering of 2, and the subsequent measures have various combinations of 1, 2, 3, and 4. The staff is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the word *dolce*. The second staff, starting at measure 56, contains four measures. It begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, and then two measures of rests. The first measure is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the word *(sub.)*. The second measure is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The third measure is marked with a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fourth measure is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Example 6. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, mm. 49–59, cello part, fingering suggestions

Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, II, mm. 98-106

This excerpt is the second variation of the opening theme. This variation is played by the cello and the viola section together with *pizzicati* accompaniment in the most of string section, as in the first variation. This time, the flute, oboe and bassoon sustain long notes above. The excerpt has many of in common with the theme and the first variation. Since it is the second variation of the opening theme, the tempo and the tone color should remain the same. On the contrary, this excerpt consists of the thirty-second notes, making it the most challenging excerpt in Beethoven Symphony No. 5. Also, one should be aware of the dynamics of this excerpt. The sudden *pp* in m. 105 is a unique element in this excerpt and a big contrast with the sudden *f* at the end the theme and the first variation. Specially, the *subito pp* in m. 105 has to be expressed clearly. In order to do so, choosing the dynamic at the beginning of the except is important. It should not be too soft, because it should get softer in m. 105. In the case of arriving already too soft in m. 104, you can increase the volume slightly (should not be obvious) to prepare a drop to the *subito pp*.

1. Tempo

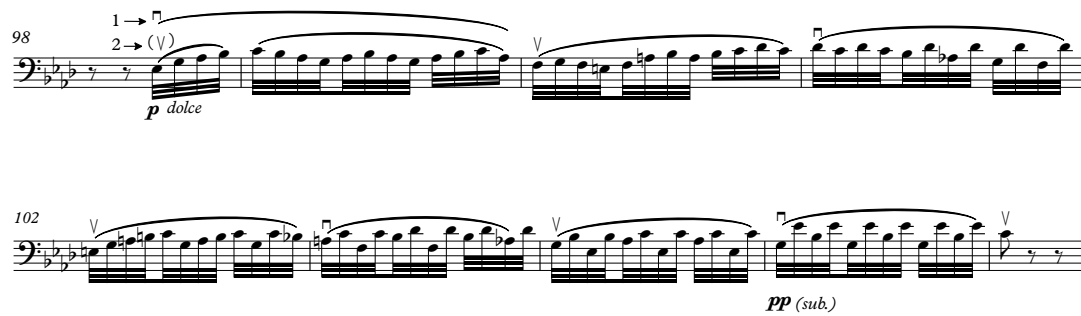
In auditions, it is important to keep the same tempo when moving from one excerpt to the another. It is common to be asked to play the theme, first and the second variation in a row (occasionally, the first variation is excluded). However, since cellists do not get to play the whole movement through in the audition, some of the cellists lose the feeling of the steady tempo in the short break between the excerpts. Especially when playing this second variation, many cellists make the mistake of taking a faster tempo than the theme and the first variation, because of the shorter note values. This can be

avoided by setting the eighth-note pulse before starting to play the excerpt as well as singing a few measures of the theme of the first variation in your mind before the excerpt starts.

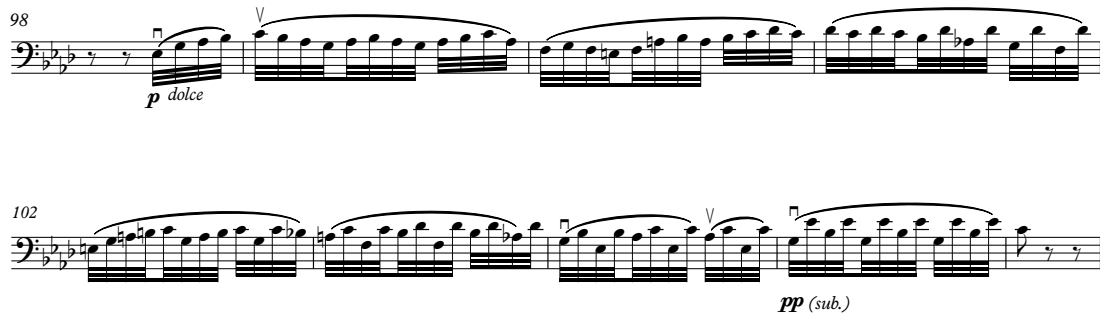
2. Bowing and fingering

This excerpt presents a long-connected phrase like the theme and variations. There should be no interruptions, despite the string-crossings and the technical difficulty in the left hand throughout the excerpt. Unlike in the first variation, it is impossible to vibrate all the notes because of the short note values. The *dolce* character should come from the smooth string crossings and well-controlled bow speed.

Unlike in the first variation, there are a few different possibilities for bowings and fingerings. One slur per measure is used most commonly as written in original score (Ex. 7. 2). Another possibility is starting with a down-bow and playing mm. 98 and 99 in one bow (see Ex. 7. 1). This bowing avoids the bow changing sound at the beginning of the excerpt. And when you use only a little bow on the down-bow in m. 103, there is only a little bow to get back in m. 104. It would be helpful to play m. 104 *subito pp*, because it comes at the tip of the bow. The final possible bowing is shown below in Ex. 7. 3. This bowing is suitable for the following fingering. In m. 103, when using the open A string, be careful not to make a shrill sound with the high open string. But with the up-bow in m. 103, the open A string will be played at the tip of the bow, when it is easy to avoid a shrill sound. There is a change of the bow at the middle of m. 104. You can slightly increase the volume to prepare a drop to the sudden *pp* in m. 105. Use a small amount of the bow at the tip to create the *pp* sound.



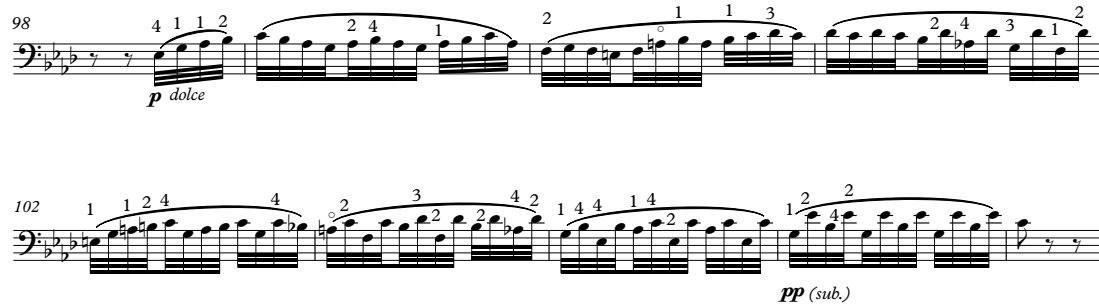
Example 7.1 and 7.2. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, mm. 98–106, cello part, possible bowings



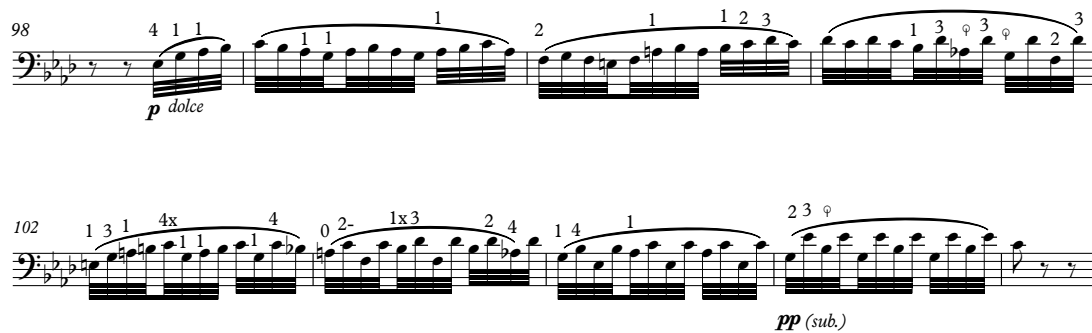
Example 7.3. The same, with up-bow for *subito pp*

Different kinds of fingerings are possible for this excerpt, each with its advantages and disadvantages. Match the fingerings with different bowings to find out what matches your hands and technique. It is common to play m. 101 in lower position for left hand and cross strings between A and D strings (see Ex. 8. 1.) It might be easy for the left hand, but it will cause a lot of string crossings. On the other hand, if you want to avoid several times of string crossings between the A and D strings, you can decide to use a thumb position in m. 101 (see Ex. 8.2). This fingering in thumb position might seem difficult and unfamiliar at the first try. However, it could make the bow work more easily. I recommend to use this fingering, especially in auditions, because I find this fingering works better in auditions (when it is practiced well). There is no definitive

fingering and bowing for everyone, because the condition of each cellists is different. It is important to explore various possibilities and find out what the most suitable for you.



Example 8.1. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, II, mm. 98–106, cello part, fingerings in lower position



Example 8.2. The same, fingerings in thumb position

In general, the excerpts from the second movement of Beethoven No. 5 are asked to play as a set. Among the three, the theme and the second variation is play the most frequently. (The first variation is omitted sometimes.) When playing these three excerpts from the second movement of Beethoven Symphony No. 5, many cellists make the mistake of playing them too loudly. Bear in mind that the whole cello section will be

playing the opening melody together. When you are playing alone in the audition, think of what the sound will be like when playing in the section.

Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73, II, beginning to m. 15

Brahms's Second Symphony was written in the summer of 1877, and premiered on December 30th that year by the Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Hans Richter. This symphony has four movements, of which the second is in B major, the parallel major key to the relative minor of D major. Jan Swafford says in his biography of the composer: "This Adagio movement is the longest slow movement in all of his symphonies, and at the same time the most beautiful movement of all."⁹

The cello section starts the movement with two descending phrases while the bassoons have a countermelody. The theme starts from an emphasized upbeat, so the meter is ambiguous until the last beat of m. 2. The distinguishing feature of this theme is the ambiguity. With the displaced meter at first two measures and at mm. 6–8, it is also not clear what the key we are in at the beginning of the melody. After the B natural in m. 2, the B major key become clear. The subdominant note which is E in B major keeps appearing every measure in diverse nuances until m. 5. The cellos continue to lead the melody until m. 12, but this is not the end of the theme. From the last beat of m. 12, the violins and flutes take over the theme, and the cellos play the countermelody originally in the bassoons (see Ex. 9).

⁹ Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 439.

Adagio non troppo

2 Flöten
2 Oboen
2 Klarinetten in A
2 Fagotte
2 Hörner in H
2 Trompeten in H
3 Posaunen
u. Baßtuba
Pauken in H u. G

1. Violine
2. Violine
Bratsche
Violoncell
Kontrabaß

Adagio non troppo

Fl.
Ob.
Klar.
(A)
Fag.
Hr.
(H)
Trpt.
(H)
Pos.
u.
Btb.
1. Viol.
2. Viol.
Br.
Vcl.
K-B.

J. B. 2

Example 9. Brahms, Symphony No. 2, II, mm. 1–14, score

The opening phrase of this movement is frequently requested after excerpts from Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in auditions. If the participants show their rhythmic precision in the Beethoven, now they have to demonstrate their ability to make long phrases. It is extremely challenging to play this melody without any bow changing, string-crossing, or shifting noise. In order to achieve this goal, you should plan the bow extremely well, avoiding noise whenever changing bows. The direction of the phrases is also one of the most important aspects of this excerpt. You need to know where to place the climax of the phrase, so as to bring out the arch shape in each phrase. Following the dynamics written in the score also helps to create direction in the phrase.

Some orchestras may call for the opening phrase from the third movement of Brahms Symphony No. 3 instead, but some of the same considerations apply.

1. Tempo

The starting tempo of the second movement is *Adagio non troppo*, which means “slow but not too much.” Michael Musgrave remarks that:

Brahms often used tempo directions which are difficult to interpret: with their qualifying “più” and “poco,” they give the impression of a tempo which he had yet to finalise or perhaps one slightly different from the basic tempi suggested by single-word indications.¹⁰

It is a slow movement, but it should have the feeling of the eighth note mentioned as an inner pulse. There is no metronome marking in this movement. It is helpful to listen to various recordings, not only the older, legendary ones but also recent ones. It is especially helpful if you can listen to a recording by the orchestra or the conductor that

¹⁰ Michael Musgrave, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 243.

you are auditioning for. In the performance of the Berlin Philharmoniker conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, the movement starts around eighth note = 84, and moves faster from the pick up to m. 3. Finally, the tempo is settled around eighth note = 90 from the eight notes in m. 6.¹¹ It is common to start the movement in a slightly slower tempo and move forward as the eight notes appear in real performance. However, it could be risky to play the excerpt in various tempos in auditions. I recommend to set one tempo and keep it for the entire excerpt. It is also important to find a tempo that suits you, considering vibrato, bow speed, and position changes in the left hand. I suggest the tempo around eighth note = 90. Once you decide the tempo, it is essential to feel the inner pulse.

2. Dynamics

Brahms indicated the dynamic specifically on the score, and it has to be conveyed clearly. Playing with the precise dynamic is the key element that audition committees look for in this excerpt.

The dynamic marking at the beginning of this movement is *poco f*. As is mentioned in Tempo markings, Brahms often used word ‘*poco*’ in dynamic markings also. *Poco forte* means ‘somewhat loud’ or ‘not too loud’. “*Poco forte* is an ambiguous marking which was favored by Brahms.”¹² One should keep in mind that it is not *f*, and the sound should not be forced. This *poco f* stays *sempre* until m. 5, where a *crescendo* appears for the first time in this movement. It is tempting to become louder with the ascending four notes from the low F sharp at the end of m. 3 to the high F sharp in m. 4,

¹¹ Johannes Brahms Symphony No. 2, II conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCMLKVfhyD8> (accessed 30 July, 2017).

¹² Hoffman, Miles. *The NPR Classical Music Companion: Terms and Concepts from A to Z*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 80.

but do not increase the volume until m. 5. The *crescendo* in m. 5 goes up to the third beat, not to the highest note of the measure, a common mistake is confusing the highest note with the top of the *crescendo*. Figuring out the top point of the hairpin is a crucial point that the audition committee might well pay attention to.

From the *p* at the end of m. 5, not only does the volume become softer; the character of the sound also has to be changed. The tone color of this *p* section should be tender and sweet, like *dolce*, contrasting with the full sound at the beginning.

A long *crescendo* happens from m. 8. Even though the *crescendo* marking ends in m. 9, the volume has to be sustained until the second beat of m. 10, the climax of the theme. The most common mistake is to make a *diminuendo* after the highest note in m. 9. It is important to keep up the intensity of the sound until the beginning of the *diminuendo* in m. 10. It is also important not to become loud too soon during the long *crescendo*. Keep in mind that one should save the volume, despite the leaps in mm. 8–9.

A hairpin occurs in m. 11. After that, Brahms specifically put a *crescendo* on the last sixteenth note in m. 11, instead of starting the *crescendo* in m. 12. This means the last sixteenth note leads into the next measure, but it should not be forced or too loud. Changing from D string to A string (B flat–G natural) will give enough volume on the G natural.

Poco f appears once again on the last beat of m. 12, when the cellos play the counter-melody that the bassoons played at the beginning. This *poco f* is also not very loud. The sound should not be forced or aggressive. Instead, use C string to create a dark and heavy sound.

3. Bowing and bow distribution

Brahms marked slurs clearly above the notes in this excerpt (as confirmed by the autograph manuscript). The slurs imply more phrasing and articulation than bowing (see Ex. 10.1). Jan Swafford says: “Brahms generally ignored the whole question of using slurs to indicate string bowing. Most of the slurs marked in his published scores show phrases rather than bowing, or else the bowing have been put in by a string player, who was usually [Joseph] Joachim.”¹³ In practice, it is unrealistic to use Brahms’s slurs as bowings. In general, cellists have to divide most of the slurs to make this excerpt playable (see Ex. 10.2). Despite breaking the slurs, it is extremely important to play legato with Brahms’s phrasings. In order to make smooth bow changes, the use of bow has to be well-planned and the bow speed regulated through the entire melody. Also, as already mentioned, the dynamics indicated on the score are specific and should be followed as written. Playing the excerpt with accurate dynamics is mostly influenced by bow control.

There are two possible bowings at the beginning of the excerpt. One starts with an up-bow (see Ex. 11.1). The up-bow prevents accenting the first note of the melody and avoids an aggressive sound. (But make sure it is *poco f!*) Also, an up-bow helps to show the direction of the descending lines and creates a better sound. Since the length of each bow would be the same, it is easy to match the bow speed. However, some cellists may feel uncomfortable starting with an up-bow, especially in an audition.

If you choose to start the excerpt with a down-bow, there should be another bow change between the second and third beats of m. 2, because the last note of m. 2 has to come with a up-bow (see Ex. 11.2). In this case, the up-bow for the second beat of m. 2 should not use whole bow, but should stay in the upper half of the bow to keep the same

¹³ Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 448.

bow speed. In m. 3, there are seven eighth notes that have dots over them covered by slurs. In Brahms's repertoire, we often find this notation: The dots under the slur mean *portato*: stopped notes in one bow.¹⁴

When using the suggested bowing from the last eighth note of m. 3, which is slurred to the next measure, be careful not to increase the volume with the up-bow in the ascending notes. Also, do not use too much bow for the note F in m. 4, to save a proper amount of bow for the following sixteenth note. For a smooth connection between the D sharp and high B in m. 5, it will be good to save the bow for the D sharp at the end of the down-bow. In that case, shifting from D sharp to B will not become hectic.

From m. 6, it is practical to break the written slur into two bows. Despite the changes of bow, the sound should be connected, and no bow-changing sound should be heard.

The up-bow from the last eighth note in m. 8 to the next measure should not include too much *crescendo* yet. After observing the *crescendo* on the last beat of m. 9, the bow speed has to be decreased immediately for the next bow. (The last beat of m. 9 is for only one beat, and the next bow is for two and a half beats.) In order to sustain the volume with this slow bow speed, more weight is needed on the down-bow in m. 10. In m. 11, the *crescendo* occurs on a down-bow. Again, the down-bow has to be started with a slow bow speed and the volume increased to the end of the down-bow. The third beat of m. 12 has to be played as long as possible (within a beat), in order to prepare the big leap down to the low F sharp. There should not be a big silence between the third and the last beat of m. 12, but a slight "breath" is allowed.

¹⁴ Musgrave, *Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, 236–37.



Example 10.1. Brahms, Symphony No. 2, II, m. 1–22, cello part, with the composer's original slurs

Adagio non troppo

Example 10.2. The same, with bowing suggestions

Adagio non troppo

Example 11.1. Brahms, Symphony No. 2, II, mm. 1–2, cello part, bowing starting with an up-bow



Example 11.2. The same, bowing starting with a down-bow

4. Vibrato and fingerings

Vibrato is one of the important aspects of playing this excerpt. In order to create the proper character of the excerpt with the *espressivo* marking at the beginning, not only is bow control needed, but the vibrato has to be matched to the sound. First, a lot of vibrato is needed for the two descending lines at the beginning. Also, the notes under one slur should be played with the same type of vibrato. In m. 3, there are dot markings with slurs above. As already mentioned, these dots should be considered *portato*, not *staccato*, because of the slurs. It should be understood as a slight “breathing” between the notes rather than playing them too short. Vibrato would help to prevent them from becoming too short or breaking up the phrase.

There are some technical issues in m. 5, which is probably the most demanding measure for the left hand. First, the shift from the second eighth note to the second beat (D sharp–B) is difficult. Some cellists falter in the shift from the first finger (D sharp) to the third finger (B), especially when nervous in an audition. The biggest danger is rushing into the high B. To avoid this, the first finger (D sharp) has to hold the note long enough to prepare the shift to the third finger (B). Also, the timing of the bow change should match the shift. Aligning the shift in the left hand with the bow in the right hand should be practiced precisely.

Dynamics are the next issue in this measure. Vibrato is an important aid in playing the dynamics properly. Since the *crescendo* goes up to the third beat of the measure, the sixteenth note after the B in m. 5 should be louder than the note before. In order to avoid a drop in volume and to keep up the intensity during the sixteenth-note rest, vibrato has to be mentioned as long as possible. This shift from D sharp to high B is challenging.

With the color change in m. 6, the character of the vibrato has to be changed. Compared with the full vibrato at the beginning, now the vibrato now becomes relaxed and wider, creating a tender and relaxed atmosphere. Of course, the eighth notes should be connected following the written slurs. As the *crescendo* appears from m. 8, the intensity of the vibrato should be developed to the climax of the phrase.

The second beat of m. 12 should be played as long as possible (within a beat) to end the theme and prepare the coming counter-melody. While the bow changes string from A to C in the air, the vibrato should be kept up, to avoid a silence between the third and the last beat of m. 12.

The countermelody that was played by the bassoons at the beginning appears again in the cello section from the last beat of m. 12. Since this countermelody begins on the C string, the thickest string on the cello, a wide vibrato is required. The suggested fingering for m. 14 is going up on the G string, instead of changing to the D string in the middle (see Ex. 12). The higher positions on G string would also sound better with a wide vibrato.

Adagio non troppo

12

poco f

dim.

p

dim.

A

Example 12. Brahms, Symphony No. 2, II, mm. 1–19, cello part, fingering suggestions

Claude Debussy, *La mer*, 2 measures before 9 to 6 measures after 9 (mm. 84–92)

Claude Debussy began *La mer* in 1903, completing it two years later. The work was influenced by the English landscape painter J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), a progenitor of the Impressionists, as well as Katsushika Hokusai's famous print *The Hollow of the Wave off Kanagawa*, a copy of which hung on the composer's wall.¹⁵ At Debussy's request, a reproduction of the Hokusai print appeared on the cover of the first edition of *La mer* (1905) (see Figure. 1). The premier performance was given on 15 October 1905 in Paris, by the Orchestre Lamoureux under Camille Chevillard's baton. Debussy himself conducted it in Paris in 1908. A second edition was issued in 1909, with the composer's revisions.

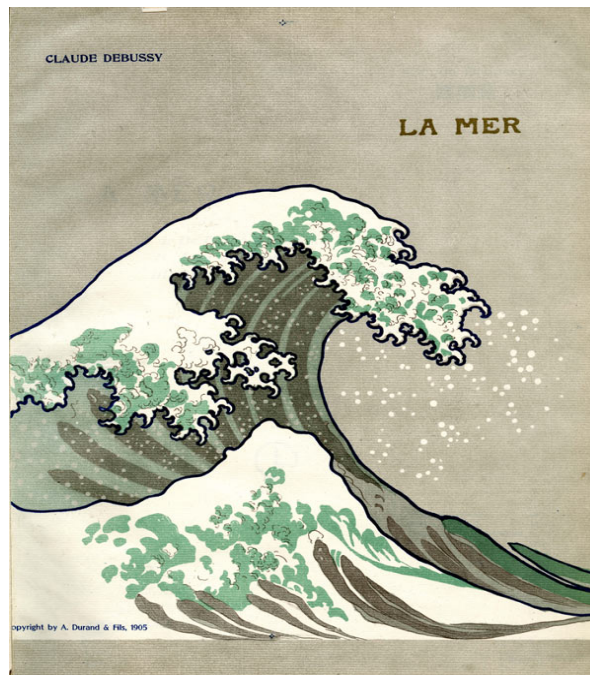


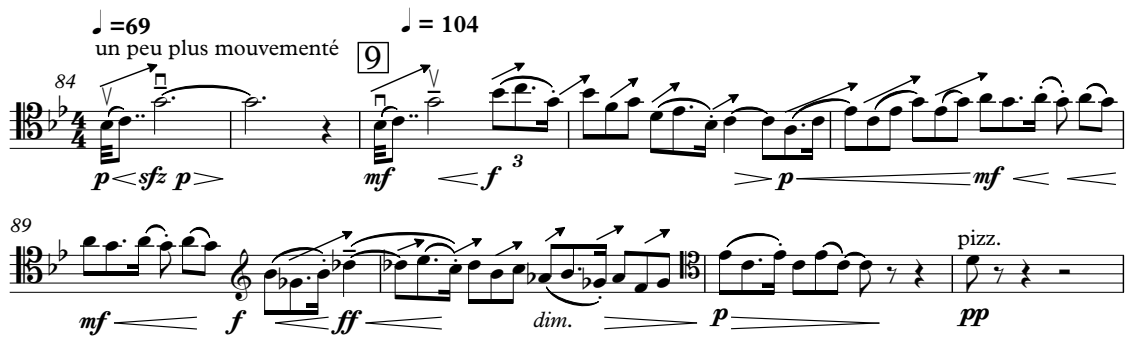
Figure 1. Debussy, *La mer*, the cover of the first edition (1905)

¹⁵ Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 178.

La mer consists of three movements and bears the subtitle “Three symphonic sketches for orchestra.” Even though Debussy never called the work a symphony, the structure is similar to that of some early symphonies (two fast outer movements with a slow movement in the middle).

The excerpt is from the first movement, *De l’aube à midi sur la mer* (From dawn to noon at sea), which contains five sections. In the second section, the first two measures are played by eight cellos, and from Rehearsal No. 9, sixteen cellos play a cello quartet (four cellos on each part) (see Ex. 13). Even though only the first cello part is asked at auditions most of the time, it would be a good idea to practice the other parts, too. In any case, understanding the excerpt as part of a quartet is helpful.

In auditions, the initial challenge for cellists is to produce the proper sound quality of the piece. The character should be floating and airy to describe the waves of the sea. Debussy illustrates the waves with the ascending figures (see Ex. 14). The next challenge is to play with accurate rhythm. This excerpt consists of a variety of rhythms: dotted, tied-over notes, etc. Playing these rhythms precisely is important. The last issue is the dynamics. The dynamic indications by the composer are specific and should be brought out clearly in the audition.



Example 14. Debussy, *La mer*, mm. 84–92, first cello part with arrow markings for the direction of waves

1. Tempo

Debussy had misgivings about putting metronome markings in his scores. He wrote to the publisher Jacques Durand in 1915: “You know what I think of metronome marks: they’re right for a single bar, like ‘roses, with a morning’s life.’ Only there are ‘those’ who don’t hear music and who take these marks as authority to hear it still less!”¹⁶ Nevertheless, Debussy wrote specific metronome markings in pencil on the manuscript.

¹⁶ Simeone, Nigel. “Debussy and Expression.” Chapter. In *the Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, edited by Simon Trezise, 101–16. Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 107.

According to the markings by the composer, the first two measures, *Un peu plus mouvementé* (a little more lively), bear the marking quarter note = 69. The tempo speeds up to quarter note = 104 at Rehearsal No. 9, *Très rythmé* (very rhythmic). There are many tempo changes in this movement overall.

These metronome markings provide good guidelines for cellists when practicing this excerpt. The first step is to practice with a metronome. Once you understand the idea of the tempo given by the composer, the next step is to move the tempo around (still near the metronome markings). It is helpful to feel the movement of the melody with a flexible rather than fixed tempo. In performances and recordings, we can easily hear the flexibility of tempo throughout this excerpt. The last step in practicing is to find a certain basic tempo at which you can play the whole excerpt, with a feeling of waves. In the demanding conditions of an audition, it is easier to play accurate rhythms when playing at a steady tempo.

2. Tone Color

La mer has a unique quality of sound, distinguishing it from all other works on standard audition lists. In contrast with the excerpts from symphonies by Beethoven and Brahms, which require legato, Debussy's masterpiece requires a floating and airy sound. It would be good to explore playing the excerpt with different tone qualities. In auditions, committees look not only for accuracy of what is written on the score such as rhythm, intonation, and dynamics, but to the intangible character of each excerpt. The key to success in this excerpt from *La mer* is to describe the movement of the waves in the sea. In order to make a floating sound, the bow has to be close to the finger board, and even go over the finger board at the lowest point of the dynamics in m. 91. The overall bow

speed has to be fast, not putting too much weight on the bow, to make the sound airy. And you need to be able to suggest the lively quality of the waves referred to in the tempo marking.

3. Rhythm

This excerpt mainly consists of triplets (except for two reverse double-dotted rhythms in mm. 84 and 86). The triplets sometimes are dotted and/or tied over. To play these various rhythms accurately, begin practicing by subdividing into the smallest note value, a sixteenth-note triplet. For instance, this practicing method can be used from the last beat of m. 86. Practice that beat as two sixteenth notes of B flat, three sixteenth notes of C, and one sixteenth note of G (see Ex. 15 for the rhythm). The same practicing method can be used for all the triplet rhythms.



Example 15. Practice method with subdividing

The first beats of mm. 84 and 86 are reversed double-dotted rhythms. To play this rhythm, feel the thirty-second note as a grace note on the beat. The thirty-second note should be as fast as possible. Subdividing is not needed here, because thirty-second notes are too fast to be practical. Also, it is good to vibrate the double-dotted eighth note. In general, the dotted rhythms have to be precise and crisp, in contrast to the triplets.

4. Articulation

One of the challenges of this excerpt is to play the marked articulations. Some of the notes have a dot above them. A dot above the sixteenth note of the dotted rhythm

(e.g., the last beat of m. 86) implies a slight breath between the dotted eighth note and the sixteenth note. For example, there are two kinds of articulation for the dotted rhythm in m. 87. The second beat has a dot over the sixteenth note. In this case, the dotted eighth note has to be lifted to give a “breath” before the sixteenth note, as just mentioned. In contrast, the last beat does not have a dot, so the dotted eighth note has to be connected to the sixteenth note (see Ex. 16).



Example 16. Debussy, *La mer*, m. 87

The eighth notes not covered by a slur should be played with *détaché* bowings. These notes should not be connected to each other, each of them slightly lifted.

5. Dynamics and Bowings (see Ex. 17)

Debussy’s dynamic indications are extremely specific. Unlike the metronome markings, which allow a little freedom, these dynamic markings from the composer should be followed exactly. In order to adhere to precise dynamic markings, the bowing needs to be decided carefully. Playing the excerpt with precise dynamics as written will naturally express the contour of the waves in the sea.

In m. 84, starting with an up-bow makes a natural hairpin. A *sfz* at the top of the hairpin should be considered a little accent, still within *p*. The dynamic marking in m. 86 has to be differentiated from that in m. 84. Not only is the *mf* in m. 86 louder, the sound is more solid than the *p* in m. 84. Unlike the previous G, the half-note G in m. 86 starts from *mf*, and grows louder up to the *f* on the last beat. To make this *crescendo* with an

up-bow, m. 86 is better started with a down-bow (using only the upper half of the bow). The *f* has to be held until the third beat of m. 87, when the dynamic comes down to *p* quickly for a beat.

Because the lowest point of m. 87 is on the open A string, it should be played carefully with less bow hair. From this *p* the excerpt develops to its climax, although the composer put short *crescendi* instead of a long *crescendo* to indicate the rise to the climax. This notation shows the composer's intention to make slight drops of volume a few times, imitating the swells of the waves.

After the music arrives at *ff*, the volume keeps growing to the third beat of m. 90, where a *diminuendo* begins. The down-bow on the third beat of m. 90 should move quickly toward to the tip of the bow. With such a bowing, not only does the volume become softer, the tone color becomes more floating. From this beat to the end of the excerpt, the bow should stay only in its upper half. After the long *diminuendo* that is been started from m. 90, the *pizzicato* in m. 92 should be in *pp*, which is the softest dynamic of the excerpt. Since the *pizzicato* is the last note to end the phrase before the new phrase starts, the *pizzicato* should be dry and almost inaudible.

♩ = 69
un peu plus mouvementé

♩ = 104

84 $p < sfz > p$

85 mf

86 f

87 p

88 mf

89 mf

90 f

91 ff

92 $dim.$

93 p

94 pp

95 $pizz.$

Example 17. Debussy, *La mer*, mm. 84–92, first cello part, bowing suggestions

6. Fingerings and Vibrato

This excerpt is also challenging for the left hand. The most challenging part is mm. 89–90 (specially the third beat of m. 89). My suggested fingering is to stay on the A string (see. Ex. 19). Then the left hand would stay on the A string for the entire excerpt. Staying on one string also maintains the same sound color. This fingering requires a wide stretch from the thumb to the first finger (G flat–B flat), so be careful with the intonation. However, some cellists might feel uncomfortable playing the G flat with the thumb. In that case, there is another possible fingering for the third beat of m. 89 (see Ex. 18). The optional fingering is to cross the strings to avoid the use of the thumb and the stretch. When playing with this fingering, make sure that the color of the sound is unchanged, and the volume should not become softer on the G flat on the D string.

♩ = 69
un peu plus mouvementé ♩ = 104

84 $p < sfz > p$ mf $< f$ 3 p mf $< <$

89 mf f ff $dim.$ p $pizz.$ pp

option ↓

mf f ff $<$

II

Example 18. Debussy, *La mer*, mm. 84–92, first cello part, fingering suggestions with optional fingering in m. 89

**Felix Mendelssohn, Incidental Music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 61,
Scherzo, from N to O (mm. 296–323)**

Felix Mendelssohn composed the Incidental Music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 61, in 1843. King Frederick William IV of Prussia loved the music of Mendelssohn and asked him to compose incidental music to the celebrated play by Shakespeare. Larry Todd points out the clever way in which Mendelssohn re-used his own overture on the subject: "Rather than compose entirely new music for the production, Mendelssohn strategically chose to re-use his concert overture and its colorful assortment of motifs, thereby facilitating, retrospectively, their identification in the youthful composition of 1826."¹⁷

The overture that sprung from the imagination of the 17-year-old composer spawned the most celebrated incidental music in history. The overture took first place in the Incidental Music, which contains fourteen pieces. Among the fourteen, the scherzo movement appears as the second, in the role of an intermezzo between the first and the second act of Shakespeare's play. Glenn Stanley remarks that Mendelssohn's "inimitable scherzo character is best known from the Incidental Music to a Midsummer Night's Dream."¹⁸ The movement, in 3/8 meter, is known for its featherlike lightness, but also has to be vigorous and lively.

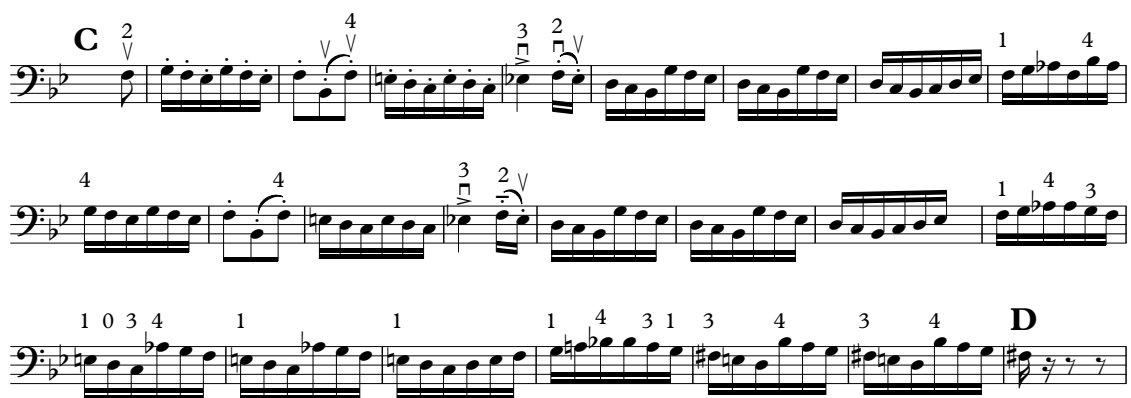
Audition lists are designed to assess the ability of participants in a variety of aspects. The lists always contain one or more excerpts made up of continuous and fast

¹⁷ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Mendelssohn, Felix," by R. Larry Todd, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/51795pg12>, accessed July 23, 2017.

¹⁸ Glenn Stanley, "The Music for Keyboard," In *the Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

running notes, so judges can see that participants can play fast excerpts cleanly and evenly in a steady tempo. There are a few notable excerpts that are made entirely of fast running notes. The best-known examples besides the Mendelssohn are from the Overture to *The Bartered Bride* by Bedřich Smetana, the Trio from the third movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 8, and the fifth variation from *Variations on the St. Anthony Chorale* by Brahms. But, certainly, the scherzo movement of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mendelssohn is the most famous and frequently requested movement.

Two excerpts from the scherzo movement are generally used for auditions. The first is from letter C to D (see Ex. 19), and the next from letter N to O. The basic elements of the two excerpts are the same, although the first is considered easier than the second. The main difference between two excerpts is the key. Overall key of Scherzo is G minor. The first excerpt is in B-flat major, the relative major, the second excerpt is in G major, the parallel major. In each excerpt, the theme begins on subdominant of the local key. Both excerpts are not harmonically complete; the cello part is left hanging. Another difference, besides the key and the register, is the dynamics, especially toward the end. In this document, I discuss only the second (from letter N to O), which is asked for more often. You can approach the first excerpt with the same ideas as below.



Example 19. Mendelssohn. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Scherzo, letter C to D, cello part, bowing and fingering suggestions

All the string sections except the basses play the melody together (see Ex. 20). It has to be played extremely simply and lightly. Most importantly, it should be steady and accurate. For the sake of consistency, the bow has to be well-controlled and coordinated with the left hand. In order to create the lightness of the scherzo, the bow stroke has to be off the string, close to *spiccato*. There are also many string crossings between the A and D strings. In addition, the dynamic markings could easily disturb the evenness of the sixteenth notes. The bow control must be impeccable to succeed with this excerpt in auditions.

in C.
pp
pizz.

M. B. 417.



Example 20. Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Scherzo, letter N to O, score

1. Tempo

The tempo marking of the scherzo movement is *Allegro vivace*, “fast and lively.”

Vivace is more an indication of the atmosphere within the tempo of allegro. There is no metronome marking in the score. The tempo should be fast enough to feel one measure as one pulse, but not too fast that it feels rushed or hectic. The recording of the Chicago Symphony under the baton of James Levine takes the tempo around dotted quarter note =

88.¹⁹ The Wiener Philharmoniker with Pierre Monteux recorded this piece around dotted quarter note = 84.²⁰ As well as these great recordings, listen to different recordings as references to decide the tempo. Experiment with different tempos within a reasonable range to find the tempo that suits you. Another aspect to consider when deciding the tempo is the bow stroke. The proper tempo will make the bow bounce off the string naturally.

Considering the aspects above, I suggest playing this excerpt at dotted quarter note = 86. To play this excerpt as fast as you can should not be the goal of practice. In any case, once you start playing the excerpt at a certain tempo, the tempo has to be retained to the end. The most important issue to think of is “Do not rush!” Thinking in groups of four measures may help.

Once you find a good tempo, the next step in practicing is to play with the same tempo every time. It helps to develop a routine before playing. It is common to sing a few measures of the excerpt before you start. My own method is to feel the beat ahead of playing the excerpt, singing the first flute part that appears three measures before the cello part starts (see Ex. 21). This flute part acts as a cue to the unison of the strings. Singing the flute part before playing helps to feel the pulse right at the beginning of the excerpt. Since the excerpt is in the middle of the piece, a sudden start would not be preferable. I suggest imagining coming in and playing in the middle of scherzo.

¹⁹ Felix Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Levine (Polydor International GmbH Hamburg, 1985), compact disc.

²⁰ Felix Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Wiener Philharmoniker conducted by Pierre Monteux (Decca Music Group Limited, 1971), compact disc.



Example 21. Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Scherzo, from the first flute part to cello part, mm. 293–300

2. Rhythm

The key word to describe the rhythm of this excerpt is “evenness.” Regardless of the dynamics or the shape of the phrase, the rhythm should be always even. The main rhythmic pattern is the continuous sixteenth notes. The length of every single sixteenth note should be equal and even. I suggest practicing the sixteenth notes in both dotted rhythms and reverse dotted rhythms. This is the most common method of practicing to regulate the length of continuous notes.

Another rhythmic pattern that has to be dealt with carefully is the three eighth notes in mm. 298 and 306. When the eighth notes come right after the running sixteenth notes, the second and the third eighth notes can easily become rushed (especially with the two up-bows in a row). Each of the eighth notes should be clearly in the right place.

Watch out for the length of the quarter notes in mm. 300 and 308. They should be held exactly for the length of four sixteenth notes. Subdividing will be the key to keep the quarter notes the proper length.

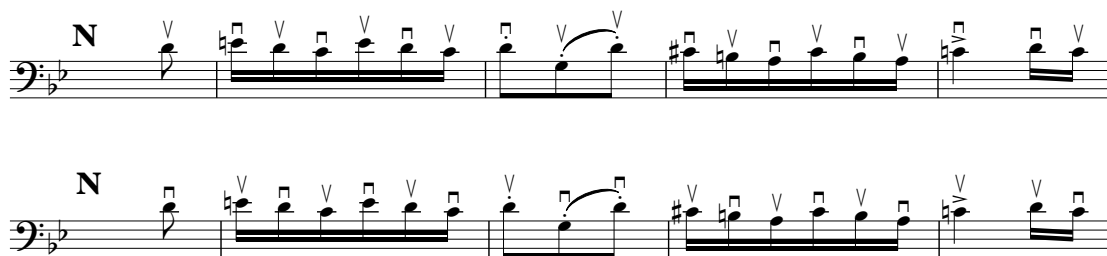
Lastly for rhythm, there is a small but important detail at the end of the excerpt. Watch out for the length of the last note. The common mistake in this note is to play it too long, like an eighth note. The ending should be also light and short, and the last note should disappear immediately. A lot of good cellists sometimes fail in auditions because they lose concentration at the end of the excerpt. It would be a shame if, after overcoming

the many other challenges, a minor error would ruin the whole excerpt.

3. Bow stroke and Bowings

In order to play the excerpt with the right rhythms in a steady tempo, the bow stroke has to be well-controlled. Mainly, the proper bow stroke for the excerpt is off the string. When the bow bounces close to the strings, it makes it easy to control the bow, and easy to play the notes evenly in a fast tempo. Another key point to play this excerpt cleanly is to use very little bow. Even when practicing the excerpt in a slower tempo, you should use a small amount of bow, as you would do in a fast tempo. Especially when playing the relatively longer notes such as quarter notes, keep in mind using as little bow as you can, because it is not possible to retake the bow for the following sixteenth notes at the performance tempo (mm. 300 and 308).

Not only does the length of the sixteenth notes matter, also the stroke and the sound of each note should match, regardless of the bowing you are using. The best practice method for this excerpt is to work on it with opposite bowings (see Ex. 22). When playing the excerpt that contains running fast notes with separate bows, the sound of the down-bows will become heavier than that of the up-bows. The first step in solving this problem is to notice the difference in sound between the down-bows and the up-bows. You will recognize the difference when you compare the ordinary bowings with the opposite bowings. When trying the opposite bowings for the first time, they might feel awkward and uncomfortable. The goal of this practice method is to match the sound of the down-bows and the up-bows, and to play the entire excerpt with opposite bowings as comfortably as the normal bowings.



Example 22. Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Scherzo, mm. 296–300, cello part, comparison between normal bowings and opposite bowings

Once you match the sound of the down-bows and up-bows, the next step is to match the sound of the A string and D string. There are quick string crossings in mm. 301–3 and 309–10. The melodic line comes down to the D string only for a sixteenth note, then back on the A string quickly. For this quick string crossing, the wrist of the right hand should stay on the level of the A string for the whole measures, and the bow should move down and come back up quickly only with the hand (not with the whole arm). Make sure the weight of the right hand does not fall on the D string. The bow should be held lightly.

The off-the-string bow stroke remains until m. 317. With the *crescendo* from m. 317, the bow stroke comes closer to the string, and finally on the string in m. 320. When the bow stroke has changed to on the string, be sure to still use very little bow.

3. Dynamics

The dynamics of this excerpt are one of the crucial points to think of when practicing this excerpt. The major issue of the dynamics is to play the hairpins properly. A hairpin appears three times in this excerpt (mm. 303–4, 311–12, and. 315–16). Each time it should be played within *p* and considered as a small swell. The hairpin, if forced,

often ruins the fluency of the sixteenth notes. Instead of trying to increase the volume with the *crescendo* of the hairpin, it is better to follow the ascending shape of the phrase. The accent above the quarter note in mm. 300 and 306 also should be within *p*. The accent should be considered a clear bite of the note, but not too aggressive or too harsh.

Unlike the excerpt from letter C to D, this excerpt ends loud. From the *crescendo* in m. 317, the volume increases and stays loud until the end of the excerpt. The repeated B-flat–A–G pattern in mm. 317–18 should not become too loud; rather, the volume increases with the ascending notes in m. 319 and arrives at *f* in m. 320.

4. Bowing and Fingering Suggestions (see Ex. 23)

The coordination of the hands should be practiced a lot. My suggested practice method to coordinate the hands is make a pause before each of the string crossings and the shifts. This method helps to feel the notes in one position as a single group. Also, it helps the left hand to always come before the bow. Of course, there should be no pause between any sixteenth notes throughout the excerpt. However, even in a fast tempo, the bow always has to wait until the left hand changes positions. Always prepare the position changes with the left hand ahead of time.

296 **N** *p* II I

304 *p*

312 II I II I *cresc.*

320 **O** *sf f*

Example 23. Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Scherzo, letter N to O, cello part, bowing and fingering suggestions

To conclude, the most important aspect that audition committees might look for in this excerpt is evenness. The issues that I mentioned above, including the tempo, rhythm, and bow stroke, have to be controlled.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36, II, beginning to letter A (m. 42)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky composed his Fourth Symphony in F minor, Op. 36, in 1877–78. It was premiered at a Russian Music Society concert conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein in Moscow on 22 February 1878. The first edition of the symphony was published by P. Jurgenson in Moscow in 1888. Tchaikovsky wrote on the score, “dedicated to my best friend.” The friend in question was Nadezhda von Meck, a patroness who supported him both financially and emotionally, as shown in his letters to her in 1877: “At the present moment I am absorbed in the symphony I began during the winter. I should like to dedicate it to you, because I believe you would find in it an echo of your most intimate thoughts and emotions.”²¹

The second of the four movements, in B-flat minor, is marked *Andantino in modo di canzona*. “Canzone” is described in *Grove Music Online* as: “In the broadest sense, the Italian word for any lyric or poetic expression. It is in this sense that the term has been used by non-Italians as a title for self-consciously simple or ‘song-like’ compositions, such as the slow movement of Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony....”²² This movement is in a style typical of the *canzona* in instrumental music. The mood of this movements is described well in his letter to Nadezhda von Meck.

“The second movement expresses another phase of suffering. Now it is the melancholy which steals over us when at evening we sit indoors alone, weary of work, while the book we have picked up for relaxation slips unheeded from our fingers. A long procession of old memories goes by. How sad to think how much is already *past and gone*! And yet these recollections of youth are sweet. We regret the past, although we have neither

²¹ Modest Chaikovskiĭ, Rosa Newmarch. *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 215.

²² *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Canzona,” by John Caldwell; available from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/04805>, (accessed 30 July 2017).

courage nor desire to start a new life. We are rather weary of existence. We would fain rest awhile and look back, recalling many things. There were moments when young blood pulsed warm through our veins and life gave all we asked. There were also moments of sorrow, irreparable loss. All this has receded so far into the past. How sad, yet sweet to lose ourselves therein!”

The movement opens with a songful theme by the oboe solo with *pizzicato* accompaniment by the strings. This melody is repeated five times over the course of the movement. After the beautiful melody by the oboe, the cellos repeat the theme immediately from m. 21. From m. 77, the violas repeat the melody in *p cantabile*, starting with the first bassoon then with the first violins. From m. 199, the first violins repeat exactly the same melody also in *p cantabile*. When the melody comes back for the last time as a bassoon solo in m. 274, it is shortened by omitting the four measures that were repeated. In the oboe version, it is marked *p semplice, grazioso*. The cellos have also *p grazioso*. When the melody is played by the oboe solo with *pizzicato* accompaniment in the strings, some freedom in the tempo is allowed, following the direction of the phrase. However, since the melody by the cellos is for the whole section together, the tempo becomes more strict. Other instruments are added when the cello section takes up the theme. The flutes and clarinets play a countermelody, the bassoon plays the same notes as the *pizzicato* of double basses, and the horns hold the dominant of B-flat with a brief neighboring note. (see Ex. 24)

Andantino in modo di canzona

1.
Flöten

2.

*Solo
p semplice, ma grazioso*

Oboen 1.2

Klarinetten
1.2 in B

Fagotte 1.2

Andantino in modo di canzona

Violine 1

Violine 2

Viola

Violoncello

Kontrabaß

*pizz.
p*

Andantino in modo di canzona

10

Ob. 1

Viol. 1

Viol. 2

Vla.

Vc.

21

1. Fl.

2. Fl.

Ob. 1

Klar. 1.2 in B

Fag. 1

1.2 in F

Hrn.

4 in F

Viol. 1

Viol. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Kb.

arco

p grazioso

pizz.

pp

32

1. Fl.

2. Fl.

Klar. 1.2 in B

Fag. 1

1.2 in F

Hrn.

4 in F

Viol. 1

Viol. 2

Vc.

Kb.

arco

mf

arco

mf

espr.

mf

Example 24. Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, mm. 1–41, score

1. Tempo

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 is one of the most popular and frequently played symphonies nowadays. Therefore, we can easily gain access to diverse resources including recordings and videos of live performances online, to aid in learning the style of the work and gaining an idea of the range of tempo. (The composer did not give a metronome marking.) For example, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin in 2015 performed this movement around quarter = 60.²³ The San Francisco Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas also plays the opening melody around quarter = 60.²⁴ In the performance by San Francisco Symphony, the tempo of the opening oboe solo is in much slower with flexibility in tempo, whereas the cello section sets a stable tempo slightly faster that lasts for the rest of the movement. As it is mentioned, it is common for the oboe to address the tempo with more freedom, because it is a solo, then when the cellos repeat the melody, the tempo to become steadier. My suggested tempo is also around quarter = 60. Because of the songful quality of the phrases, the tempo could be slightly flexible (although not as much as allowed to the oboe).

2. Tone Color

This cello excerpt is probably the most exposed one on audition lists. Only the cellos play the main melody, which is marked *grazioso* (gracefully) and should be intimate and delicate. In order to create a suitable sound for the excerpt, it is common to

²³ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin, available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb0LRZmVyq0&index=15&list=PLujivqETv1-al_spi1kPnC7xg1UlrVXWQ (accessed 30 July 2017).

²⁴ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, San Francisco Symphony conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83F2cK4gG0M> (accessed 30 July, 2017).

play the entire melody on the D string. However, that causes a lot of shifts both up and down—one of the technical challenges of the excerpt. Also, a controlled vibrato is required on every note of the excerpt. It is also important not to make a nervous sound with a tight vibrato. In order to play the melody *p grazioso*, a warm and elegant sound quality should come from the vibrato rather than the bow. The bow should be light, not heavy and full, to make the legato.

It can be tempting to overplay the melody, with too much emotion, just because it is so beautiful. The oboe version at the beginning of the movement is marked *semplice, grazioso* (simple and graceful). Even though *semplice* is not indicated for the melody in the cellos, the same quality should clearly apply. It should be still simple and graceful, not too emotional or sad. Keep in mind that the whole section will play the melody together, not individually, so little freedom is allowed.

If you are asked to play a few more measures after the theme ends, the sound quality has to change immediately to a full legato on the G string from the *mf* on the second eighth note of m. 41. From mm. 41 to 56, the cellos will play the same melody as the first violins in a lower register (two octaves below).

3. Direction of the Phrase and Dynamics

Showing the direction of the phrase is one of the elements that audition committees look for in this excerpt. The direction has to be expressed clearly while still within the tempo. It is important to know how the melody develops, where the highest point of the phrase is, and how the phrase comes down to the end. In this excerpt, moreover, the direction is intimately associated with the dynamics.

The eight measures from m. 21 until the first eighth note of m. 29 should be

played as one phrase. The phrase develops until the top point of the hairpin in mm. 25–27, the highest point of the phrase. It is good to be aware of the descending figures in the melody. The leap becomes wider, from a fourth (F–C in mm. 22–23), to a fifth (C–F in mm. 24–25), and finally, the top note of the phrase (F in m. 26) moves stepwise down a sixth at the end of the phrase (A in m. 29). This is the main idea of the first eight measures of the melody. A slight breath is needed after the first eight-measure phrase, between the first and second eighth notes in m. 29.

The second phrase starts from the second eighth note in m. 29. The first five measures of the first phrase are repeated in mm. 29–33, then the melody is expanded the second time. Instead of coming down at once from the highest note (F), the melody keeps going back up and down until m. 39, finally fading to the end in m. 41. There are two measure sequences from mm. 34–39 with hairpins. During this six measures, the non-chord tones appear every downbeat of the measures. The higher dissonances are placed at the top of the hairpins. (Looking at the bass line with the melody would help one to understand).

The dynamics will help to show directions of the melody in the excerpt. Mostly, *crescendos* appear on the ascending notes and *diminuendos* on the descending figures or at the end of the phrase (e.g., mm 25–27 and 34–39).

4. Bowings and articulation (see Ex. 25)

The choice of bowing has to be based on the direction of the phrase and the dynamics. There are two possible bowings for this excerpt. One is to start down-bow, the other to start up-bow. When starting down-bow, it becomes natural to make hairpins with up-bows on *crescendos* and down-bows on *decrecendos*. In contrast, starting up-bow

creates one huge challenge for dynamics, because the bowings go opposite to the hairpins.

In spite of the discomfort for dynamics, I prefer to start with an up-bow. It is helpful to show the upbeat feeling in m. 21, going into the next measure with an up-bow. Also, it makes the phrase always end with a down-bow. Thus, both starting and ending are better. The hairpin with opposite bowing can be overcome by practicing to save the bow at the beginning of the *crescendos*, and have less weight on the up-bow with the *decrescendos*. This practice also works better for the articulation specially with the notes with dots. These notes should be released lightly, and can be lifted slightly. Make sure that the dot is not too short, and it should be considered as a slight breathing between the eighth notes. The dot always comes between two eighth note which have the same intonation. For example, in m. 22, the F with dot has to be released, and it works better at the end of a down-bow, in order not to make this note too short or too heavy.

The image displays a musical score for the cello part of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, II, measures 21 through 43. The score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It is divided into three systems of measures. The first system (measures 21-28) includes fingerings (1-4), bowing directions (up-bow and down-bow), and dynamic markings (*p* and *grazioso*). The second system (measures 29-35) continues with similar notation, including an *espr.* marking. The third system (measures 36-43) features a large 'A' marking above measure 41 and a *mf* marking below measure 42. Bowing suggestions are indicated by slanted lines above or below the notes, and fingerings are written above the notes.

Example 25. Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4, II, mm. 21–43, cello part, bowing suggestions

5. Fingerings (see Ex. 26)

As mentioned briefly under tone color, it is better to play the entire theme on the D string to obtain the proper quality. But that makes the left hand difficult. The first shift comes in m. 22 from B flat to F, with the second to the third finger. The same connection occurs in mm. 30 and 34. This shift might be the most difficult in this excerpt. It is better to slide with the second finger and arrive at F with the third finger instead of sliding into F with the third finger. A slight *glissando* is allowed if necessary. Throughout the excerpt *glissando* is allowed for the upward shifts, but never the downward shifts. For example, from F down to C in mm. 22–23, the third finger (F) should stretch back to the first finger (C) instead of sliding back. When the leap becomes bigger, as with C to F in mm. 24–25, one should still stretch as wide as possible and slide for the rest to avoid a sliding noise.

The image shows a musical score for the cello part of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, II, measures 21–43. The score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It consists of three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 21 and ends at measure 28, marked *p* *grazioso*. The second staff starts at measure 29 and ends at measure 35, marked *espr.*. The third staff starts at measure 36 and ends at measure 43, marked *mf* and *A*. Fingering suggestions are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above the notes. Slurs and ties are used to indicate phrasing and shifts. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Example 26. Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4, II, mm. 21–43, cello part, fingering suggestions

6. Debatable Note in m. 28

As has been mentioned, the same theme is repeated five times in this movement on five different instruments. Only the cello parts have A–A–B flat–G (Ex. 27.1) instead of A–F–B flat–G (Ex. 27.2) in the eighth measure of the theme (m. 28 for the cellos). Although it is printed as A–A–B flat–G in the first and later editions, it is an open question whether it that is a misprint or the intention of the composer.

In recordings, there are some examples of playing A–F–B flat–G (repeating the same melody as others): The Vienna Philharmonic with Herbert von Karajan²⁵ and the New York Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein plays A–F–B flat–G.²⁶ In contrast, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim²⁷ and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra with Bernard Haitink play as written (A–A–B flat–G).²⁸ On the whole most orchestras play this passage as written in nowadays, although a few play A–F–B flat–G.²⁹ If there are any recordings by the orchestra or conductor you are auditioning for, they would be an important resource. If not, I suggest playing as written: A–A–B flat–G in m. 28.

²⁵ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMViOrqBzPk> (accessed 30 July, 2017).

²⁶ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, New York Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEHNGgrEYyA> (accessed 30 July, 2017).

²⁷ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cN7oFdFqtB4&list=PL4E3C878D01A31D50> (accessed 30 July, 2017).

²⁸ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Bernard Haitink, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRYcMN1AD2g> (accessed 30 July, 2017).

²⁹ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, II, Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Valery Gergiev, available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yefdJE-lKeg> (accessed 30 July, 2017).



Example 27.1. Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4, II, m. 28, cello part with notes in the original score



Example 27.2. Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4, II, m. 28, cello part with notes as other instruments play

Richard Strauss, *Don Juan*, Op. 20, beginning to one measure before letter C (m. 49)

Don Juan, Op. 20, is one of the best-known symphonic tone poems by Richard Strauss. It was composed in 1888, based on an unfinished dramatic poem by Nikolaus Lenau, a German poet. Strauss himself conducted the premiere of *Don Juan* on November 11, 1889 in Weimar, where he was working as Court Kapellmeister. The first performance had great success, earning Strauss an international reputation in his early twenties. After the premiere, Strauss wrote in his letter home: “Well, *Don Juan* was a magnificent success, the piece sounded magical and went excellently and unleashed a storm of applause fairly unprecedented for Weimar.”³⁰

Strauss’s *Don Juan* is frequently asked for in auditions. Especially, in the preliminary round, it is often requested as the last piece of the round. If the participant is considered qualified after playing excerpts by Beethoven, Brahms, and Mendelssohn, and so on, *Don Juan* would be the last barrier before advancing to the next round of auditions. The audition committee will look for virtuosic qualities. This excerpt becomes even more challenging in audition circumstances, because of the pressure of the situation. It is important to prepare this excerpt as proficiently as possible, so you can play it consistently under any circumstances. Some orchestras even put the whole work on their audition list, not specifying the part to be played, although a few parts are requested more often than others. Other orchestras may request the opening phrases together with excerpts from Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben*, Op. 40, instead, or ask cellists to prepare both works.

³⁰ Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years, 1864–1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 184.

The opening of the piece is brilliant and striking. After a sixteenth-note rest as the first downbeat of the piece, the violins, violas, and cellos start immediately with an explosive ascending figure, and the winds join in with a rhythmic unison. The opening is challenging and demanding for each instrument, including the cellos, because of its notorious technical difficulties.

1. Tempo

The tempo mark at the beginning of *Don Juan* is *Allegro molto con brio* (very fast with vivacity). The music is not only in a fast tempo but needs to be energetic. There is no metronome marking on the score. However, Strauss left a few recordings with himself conducting the piece; the recording with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra from 1944 would be a good reference to learn his ideas. In this recording, the starting tempo is around half note = 84 (then becomes slightly faster).³¹ Nowadays, it is common to take a faster tempo. For instance, in the recording by the New York Philharmonic with Alan Gilbert conducting, the starting tempo is around half note = 88.³² The work definitely becomes more challenging at a faster tempo.

It is almost impossible to play the opening in tempo at first attempt in practice. Start from a slow tempo to get the notes right, then accelerate to your goal. Although the time signature of the beginning is 2/2, it is more helpful to have a metronome beat every quarter instead of half note when practicing at the slow tempo.

³¹ Richard Strauss, *Don Juan*, performed by the Wiener Philharmoniker conducted by Strauss (Los Angeles: Everest, 1980), compact disc.

³² Richard Strauss, *Don Juan*, performed by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Alan Gilbert (New York Philharmonic, 2014), compact disc.

My suggested tempo is half note = 84–88, or quarter note = 168–176, a large range. It is true that playing in a faster tempo will sound more virtuosic, but only when you can play all the notes precisely. Therefore, cellists should not aim for the fastest tempo possible, just find a proper tempo that is manageable. Remember that you can become nervous and even frantic in an audition.

2. Technical Issues

The beginning of *Don Juan* is the excerpt asked for most frequently. The ascending sixteenth notes are particularly challenging. Even the first measure contains many difficulties. The figure of ascending sixteenth notes preceded by a sixteenth-note rest keeps coming back many times throughout the work (for example, mm. 1 and 37 in this excerpt). This is one of the most demanding figures in *Don Juan*. First, you have to feel the downbeat on the sixteenth-note rest, then not rush the following notes. So as not to stay too long on the rest, the bow has to be prepared on the string for the first note, not in the air. Also, the running sixteenth-note rhythm has to be kept in mind before making a sound. The sixteenth notes are made extremely difficult by the string-crossings. To play the notes evenly, practice with a metronome at a slower tempo, then become faster. Also, it would be effective to practice three notes then start adding one note at a time (see Ex. 28). When practicing this method, try to feel the sixteenth notes as one group, regardless of the string-crossings.



Example 28. Strauss, *Don Juan*, Op. 20, m.1, cello part, practice method

Many cellists produce *ff* from the beginning, which can easily become too aggressive. It is better to make this phrase clean and even than loud and forced. Even though the sound has to be strong, do not use too much bow and strive for the cleanest sound, even when practicing at a slower tempo. Since the tempo is extremely fast, make sure to use only a little bow for the sixteenth notes.

There are two possible fingerings for m. 1. The first is to start with the open G string and stay in first position until the half note (Ex. 29.1); the second is to start with the second finger on the C string (Ex. 29.2). There are advantages and disadvantages for both fingerings. The advantage of starting on the G string is to have one less string-crossing than Ex. 29.2., since you move from the G string to the A string. Also, many cellists particularly like first position. On the other hand, a big shift occurs to the half note E. Moving from first position to fourth position is not a challenging shift for the left hand, but it might create a *glissando*, or take a little time to get there. In other words, to succeed with this fingering, make sure to move to fourth position as cleanly and quickly as possible. The advantage of Ex. 29.2. is that there is no shift for the whole measure. Also, the string-crossings occur on the beat, which makes the coordination of the hands easier. The challenge is to stretch fingers between the first to fourth positions.



Example 29.1. Strauss, *Don Juan*, m. 1, cello part, fingering starting in first position



Example 29. 2. The same, fingering without shift

Similarly, there are two possibilities for bowings. Most cellists prefer to start the sixteenth-note figure with an up-bow (see Ex. 30.1). In that case, start close to the frog to have enough bow room for the following half note. In contrast, if you decide to start with a down-bow (see Ex. 30.2), make sure to start above the middle of the bow in order to have enough space for the first half note, which will be taken up-bow. Since all the string parts have the same figure at the beginning of the piece, be aware that other instruments might use opposite bowings. Ronald Leonard, a former principal cellist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, says of the bowing: “In these arpeggiated figures the cellos are much more comfortable beginning up-bow as opposed to the violins who prefer to begin down-bow. This is an excellent example of one of many such passages where we must go our own separate ways in the choice of bowings.”³³

³³ *OrchestraPro: Cello*, performed by Ronald Leonard, violoncello (Summit Records DCD-196, 2002), compact disc.



Example 30.1. Strauss, *Don Juan*, mm. 1–2, cello part, bowing starting up-bow

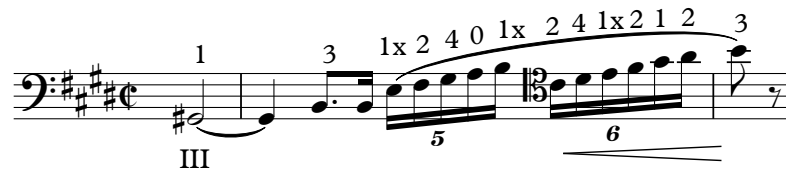


Example 30.2. The same, starting down-bow

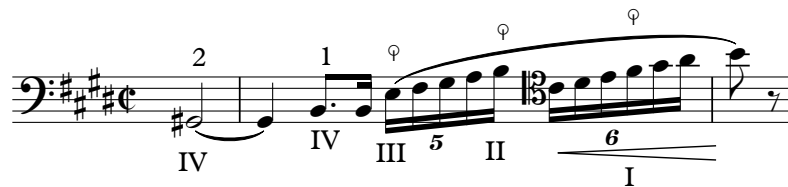
One of the greatest challenges of this excerpt is the rhythm. As just mentioned, all the string parts have the same rhythm at the beginning. Not only the cello section but the other string sections have to be together. To achieve that goal, the rhythm must be extremely even and accurate. Even though the time signature is 2/2, and you have to feel two beats to a measure, you still need to subdivide the beats into quarter notes when practicing. At the first stage of practicing, it might be helpful to accent the fourth sixteenth note to feel the subdividing, removing that accent at a later stage of practicing to make all the sixteenth notes even. The half note after the ascending figure in m. 1 should be fully sustained to the end, with no space between the half note and the first note of the triplet in m. 2. The same consideration applies in mm. 37–38.

The next challenging passage is the ascending scale in m. 4. A few different fingerings are possible for this scale. Many cellists start from first position on the D string and go up to the A string (see Ex. 31.1). In my experience, this approach tends to fail, especially in auditions, because nervous players have trouble making smooth position-

changes. In order to prevent mistakes, you can start the scale with the thumb on the G string and stay in the same position until the last note of the scale in m. 5 (see Ex. 31.2). In this case, finding the right position for the left hand is the difficult part, and that also needs to be practiced. Once you become used to this fingering in one position, it becomes much easier to play the scale well in auditions. With this scale, it is natural to increase the volume as it ascends. In addition, there is a *crescendo* only in the second half of the scale to maximize the effect of going up. Save the bow at the beginning of the scale and accelerate the bow speed towards the end.



Example 31.1. Strauss, *Don Juan*, mm. 3–5, cello part, fingerings on A string



Example 31.2. The same, fingering using thumb position

The triplets in m. 6 should move down fluently. The different length of the following two notes in mm. 7 and 8 is often ignored. The D in m. 7 is a quarter note, which should be held fully. Adding vibrato to the note would be helpful in holding the note enough. The C in m. 8 is an eighth note with an accent, which should be played

short and concisely. Not only is the length of the notes different, the articulation should be differentiated.

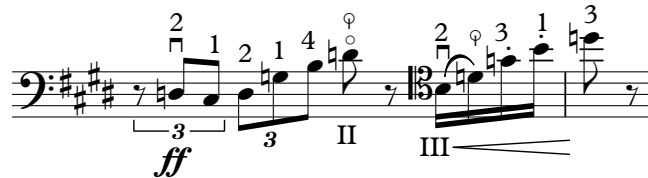
Pizzicato chords occur irregularly in mm. 9–16. Make counting the rests as important as the notes. Counting two beats in a measure will be easy in this section. It is good to mark every half-note beat on the part to see which chords come on the beat and which come off the beat. Be cautious about the different placement of each chord. Since the rests are as important as the notes here, breathing on the rest would help in counting. As for the chords, which are often misplayed, take a look at the accidentals carefully. When moving from the *pizzicato* to *arco*, the first note *arco* is a quarter note and has to be held long enough. The dynamic drops from *ff* to *mf* in m. 17. Make sure the first note of the sextuplets is not accentuated. The music becomes louder at the end of the sextuplets and the *pizzicatos* in mm. 21 and 22.

The *ff* comes back at letter A (m. 23). To make the *ff* heavy, the bow stroke should be slightly off the string at the frog. Since the first note of each measure comes down-bow in mm. 26–29, the half notes that occur on down-bows should not be cut off too soon. Keep in mind holding the half notes as long as possible until the triplets appear. Vibrating the half notes will make them ring when taking the bow off the string. A slight breath between the measures is allowed for the bow to come back to the frog (but no silence). Again, the accidentals are often misread in this section.

The 3/4 time signature is used only for one measure (m. 30). Subdividing the beats into quarter notes would be helpful to prepare that measure. The accents on the three quarter notes must be emphasized, and the dynamic of the quarter notes gradually builds up to *fff* in the following measure. To make this *fff* louder than the previous *ff*,

which is already loud enough, wider vibratos will help on the low D on the C string. To ensure, you do not to lose the volume, the dotted rhythm in m. 32 should be played on the string. The long open G and D strings last until the first quarter-note beat of m. 34. Hold this after the downbeat of m. 34; do not cut it off. If you count this measure in four, it should be cut by the second quarter.

The suggested fingering in m. 35 is to stay in one position for the sixteenth notes (see Ex. 32), which seems difficult at first glance. However, it is easy to find the D harmonic with the thumb, and the position is already settled before the sixteenth notes.



Example 32. Strauss, *Don Juan*, mm. 35–36, cello part, fingering suggestion

As already mentioned, mm. 37–39 has a similar rhythmic figure to mm. 1–3. Both parts share the same considerations. The triplets appear again at letter B, and the bow stroke is the same as at letter A.

On the last beat of m. 43, *subito pp* is marked. To make this drop of volume sudden and dramatic, the previous note has to be held loud until the end. The triplets should be played off the string and as light as possible, using the D string for the soft sound.

There is an ascending scale from m. 45 to the downbeat of m. 46. The rhythm of this scale accelerates from the sixteenth to the thirty-second notes as it goes up. In this case, practicing in subdivisions is not necessary. If you subdivide the beat into eighth

notes, the subdivision becomes too fast and hectic, especially at tempo (half note = 84–88). Instead of subdividing, the feeling of acceleration with the ascending line is more important than rhythmic precision. Even though the rhythm of the little notes should not be as precise as the other notes, the starting point of the scale has to be precise and it should end strongly on the downbeat of m. 46.

After the ascending scale, the color of the sound must be changed, becoming softer and more tender from the second half of m. 46. A wider and slower vibrato helps to bring out the color changes. At the same time, the bow should be extremely legato, and smooth bow changes are required. With the *diminuendo* at the end of 47, the dynamic moves to *p tranquillo* and *sul ponticello*. You should be able to understand the different quality of the sound, comparing this measure to m. 44, which also has triplets in a soft dynamic. In m. 48, because of the *sul ponticello*, the bow should move near the bridge. However, instead of the shrill sound that *sul ponticello* creates in general, in this measure an airy and floating sound is better suited for *tranquillo*. The proper bow stroke for m. 48 should be on the string; use the bow at the tip for a soft dynamic. The sound should almost disappear at the end of the phrase. In order to make that work, tilt the bow to use only a little bow hair.

All my suggestions for bowings and fingerings for the excerpt are shown in Ex. 33.

Allegro, molto con brio

1
ff

5
ff

13
mf

21
ff

28
fff

35
ff

39
ff

45
ff

p tranquillo

sul pont.

pp subito

Example 33. Strauss, *Don Juan*, mm. 1–49, cello part, bowing and fingering suggestions

Richard Strauss, *Don Juan*, Op. 20, seven measures before letter G to letter H (mm. 149–69)

The challenge of playing this excerpt is the sudden changes of tempos and styles.

1. Tempo

The four measures of the excerpt are marked *un poco piu lento*, a little slower than the previous tempo. Again, the recording by Strauss from 1944 would be a good reference to obtain an idea of the tempo changes. He took a slower tempo, around half note = 60, from *un poco piu lento*.³⁴ *Poco calando* appears in m. 151 on the last note of the melodic line. It will create a feeling of disappearing sound and slowing down. However, you should be aware of not getting slow and soft, because it is the other instruments that continue two more measures which execute the *poco calando*.

From *Tempo vivo* in m. 153, the tempo immediately becomes faster. The rhythmic figure of mm. 153–54 is the same as the beginning of the work. However, the tempo of this section is slightly slower than the tempo of the beginning. In Strauss's recording of 1944 he take a slower tempo than the beginning (half note = 76).³⁵ Since the change of tempo is extremely sudden and dramatic, it is better to play at a stable and safe tempo than fast and rushed.

From *Poco sostenuto* at letter G (m. 156), again the slower tempo returns (half note = 60). But the *calando* comes a half measure earlier than in the *un poco piu lento*. Compared with the *poco calando* in m. 151, which appears only on the last note of the cello part and followed by the rests, the *calando* in the middle of m. 157 requires the

³⁴ Strauss, *Don Juan*, Wiener Philharmoniker conducted by Strauss.

³⁵ Ibid.

cello part to slow down and become soft. You should be able to show an understanding of the different placement of *poco calando* and *calando*.

The *Tempo vivo* in m. 160 will be played basically at the same tempo as the previous *Tempo vivo*. From m. 166, a *tempo molto vivace* appears, signaling that it is time to get back to the tempo of the beginning (half note = 84–88).

2. Tone Color and Dynamics

Not only does the tempo change in the excerpt, the color of the sound keeps changing throughout. *Un poco piu lento* is marked **fff**, and the chromatic sixteenth notes appear with long slurs. A full legato sound is required until m. 151. Since the chromatic sixteenth notes are slurred, connect them and do not try not to make the articulation too obvious.

At the *Tempo vivo* in m. 153, unlike the same rhythmic figure in m. 1, the dynamic is **p** with *senza espressione* (without expression). This passage should be extremely dry and clean, with precision of rhythm. In order to play the sixteenth note as cleanly as possible, the bow should start from the string, and use as small an amount of bow as possible. The following half note after the sixteenth notes should not have too much vibrato and should not be lyrical. The whole note of m. 155 should get softer with *diminuendo*. Be aware that the **mf** in m. 156 is louder than the previous measure and *subito*. Even though the **mf** is louder than the measure before, it should be not too aggressive but tender compared with the **fff** in m. 149. The music becomes softer with *calando* in m. 157, returning to **p** in m. 160 at *Tempo vivo* (the same as the previous *Tempo vivo*). In m. 163, there is a marking of *subito mf*, which is louder than in m. 162, and the volume increases until the **ff** in m. 167. The high C sharp in m. 167 should be

arrived at with a strong accent. The accent also starts from the string not to make it too harsh.

3. Fingerings

There is no choice of fingering for this excerpt, although a few suggestions could make the fingerings work better.

The chromatic sixteenth notes in mm. 149–50 easily become tight with the repetitive motion of the third and fourth fingers of the left hand. It is good to release the other fingers that you are not pressing at the moment, trying to play one finger at a time. Some cellists get a cramp in their left hand because they keep pressing down the first finger when it is not playing a note. The triplets in mm. 156–57 are not as challenging as the sixteenth notes in mm. 149–50, but the same method applies for the left hand.

The ascending sixteenth notes can be practiced with the same method as the beginning of the work (see Ex. 26 from the previous excerpt). For the high C sharp with an accent in m. 167, the third finger of the left hand should be placed before the bow starts, making the high note more secure. When coming down from the thumb position in m. 168, use harmonics for A so as not to make a *glissando*. Detailed fingerings are given in Ex. 34.

CONCLUSION

This document considers how to prepare for orchestral auditions. There are many other aspects to consider besides practicing excerpts. Many young cellists are afraid to start the preparation for auditions, because they lack understanding or knowledge of the process. It is hoped that this document will help these cellists obtain information on how the audition process works.

As for the practicing process, even though playing various excerpts in auditions has become a requirement for obtaining positions in professional orchestras, it is still difficult to get access to detailed instructions on excerpts besides classes at the graduate level and private lessons with orchestra members.

From the information provided in this document, cellists, especially those beginning to audition for orchestras, should gain a better understanding of: 1. the background of the works, to conceive the excerpts as part of those works; 2. the technical issues of the excerpts; 3. a practice method to solve technical problems; and 4. how to bow and finger each excerpt.

The suggestions are intended to be guidelines for understanding the excerpts and playing them well. In order to succeed in auditions, it is important to practice a great deal and play the excerpts at a high level. Then keep playing the excerpts at a high level consistently. Cellists should be able to play well under any circumstances. That is the key to winning auditions for professional orchestras.

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